

BOOK REVIEWS

MIRACLES OF THE MIND: AN INTRODUCTION TO PARAPSYCHOLOGY.

By Simeon Edmunds. Springfield, Illinois: C. C Thomas, 1965.
Pp. xi + 204.

The task of writing an introductory history of psychical research cannot be an easy one. Indeed, it might be compared to that of being a guide at some out-of-the-way museum where, though there are plenty of good stories to relate about the various exhibits on display, no one is quite sure which exhibits are the genuine ones and which the fakes, nor, when the conducted tour is over, quite what message the public is supposed to take away. Undaunted, Mr. Edmunds has acquitted himself to such good effect that it would be ungrateful not to welcome this instructive and unpretentious little volume. The style throughout is sober without being dyspeptic; perhaps only in the title is there any concession to the hyperbolic. The author has no tiresome personal ax to grind beyond a basic conviction that parapsychology is important. He considers that the time is not yet ripe for any far-ranging theories (a point on which this reviewer finds himself in full agreement), but that meanwhile we badly need ever more and better facts. He himself is evidently well steeped in the classic literature of the field as well as being informed and up-to-date on the most recent experimental developments. The result is that he has assembled for our benefit a readable and lively collection of case material which he discusses under headings referring to the different categories of paranormal phenomena: telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, mediumship, aspects of healing, of hypnotism, and so on. His chapter on "The 'Higher Phenomena' of Hypnotism" will, I think, arouse special interest since Mr. Edmunds is himself an experienced hypnotist as well as being the author of *Hypnotism and the Supernormal*, and he is here able to cite a few rather striking incidents of a clairvoyant nature involving one of his own hypnotic subjects, a Miss B.

Mr. Edmunds, wisely in my opinion, decided to spare his readers

the interminable and often rather boring controversies that surround almost every major event in parapsychological history. On the other hand, sometimes he is perhaps too prone just to let the record speak for itself without warning the uninitiated that there may be more in it than meets the eye. Thus, when he comes to recount the two most famous episodes in the life of Swedenborg that purport to prove his paranormal powers—namely, the Stockholm fire and the missing receipt of the widow of the Dutch ambassador—he presents them as if they must be true simply because Kant accepted them. Yet, anyone who has read Professor Broad's painstaking article "Immanuel Kant and Psychical Research" (*Proceedings of the S.P.R.*, 1950; reprinted in his *Philosophy, Religion and Psychical Research*) will realize how tenuous is the chain of evidence that connects these alleged events with Kant's reception of them. Without adding appreciably to the bulk of the book, Mr. Edmunds might have achieved a more satisfactory compromise if he had extended the bibliography he appends to each chapter so that an interested and critical reader would know how to proceed in order to follow up any of the numerous topics he can do no more than touch on.

For all the author's skill and good intentions, the overall effect that his book produces is, perhaps inevitably, scrappy and unsatisfactory. It is particularly unfortunate that his otherwise interesting chapter on "Testimony and Human Fallibility" should have to come at the very end of the book, terminating as it does in a rehashing of the whole sad squalid story of the Crookes-Cook affair. Why send the reader away with a nasty taste in his mouth if your avowed aim is to increase public interest in parapsychology? I may add, however, that the book is attractively produced and is illustrated with some unusual photographs.

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